
2016 West Des Moines DirectionFinder® Survey

Executive Summary Report

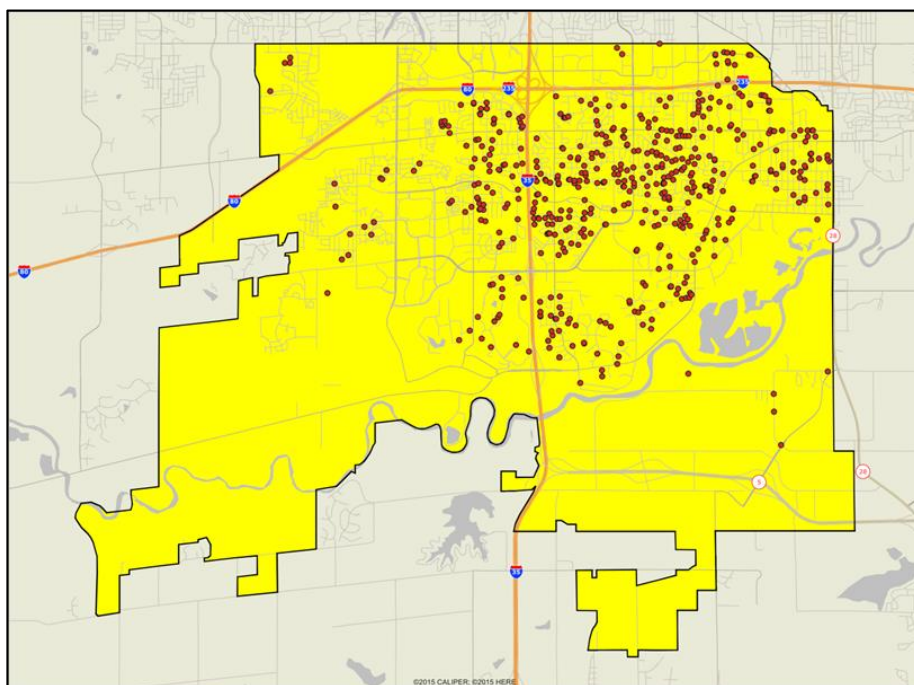
Purpose and Methodology

Purpose. The City of West Des Moines conducted its seventh *DirectionFinder*® survey during the summer of 2016 to assess citizen satisfaction with the delivery of major city services and to help determine priorities for the community as part of the City's ongoing planning process. The first survey was conducted in 2002.

Methodology. The survey was administered by phone and online to a random sample of households in the City. The goal was to obtain a total of at least 400 completed surveys. This goal was far exceeded, with a total of 570 surveys having been completed. The overall results for 570 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least $\pm 4.1\%$.

“Don’t Know” Responses. The percentage of “don’t know” responses has been excluded from many of the graphs and the benchmarking data shown in this report to facilitate valid comparisons between city services. Since the number of “don’t know” responses often reflects the utilization and awareness of city services, the percentage of “don’t know” responses has been provided in the tabular data section of this report. When the “don’t know” responses have been excluded, the text of this report will indicate that the responses have been excluded with the phrase “*who had an opinion.*”

In order to better understand how well services are being delivered by the City, ETC Institute geocoded the home address of respondents to the survey. The map to the right shows the physical distribution of survey respondents based on the location of their home.



This report contains the following:

- a summary of major findings
- charts depicting the overall results of the survey along with comparisons to the results from 2012 and 2002
- benchmarking data that show how the survey results for West Des Moines compare to other cities
- Importance-Satisfaction analysis
- GIS maps
- tabular data that show the overall results for each question on the survey
- a copy of the survey instrument.

How West Des Moines Compared to Other Communities

The City of West Des Moines is setting the standard for the delivery of city services compared to other U.S. communities. West Des Moines rated significantly above the national average (4% or more) in 45 of the 49 areas assessed. West Des Moines also scored at or above the mean ratings among other medium-sized communities (population of 50,000 to 200,000) in 47 of the 49 areas that were assessed.

The areas where West Des Moines showed the highest percentage points above the national average are listed below.

- Overall quality of City services provided (+33%)
- Walking and biking trails (+33%)
- Customer service from City employees (+28%)
- Overall image of the City (+28%)
- How well the City is planning growth (+24%)
- Cleanliness of City streets (+24%)
- City communication with the public (+23%)
- Adult recreation programs (+22%)
- Maintenance of sidewalks (+22%)
- Value received for City tax dollars and fees (+20%)

Major Findings

- **Perceptions of the City.** Most (93%) of the residents surveyed, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with their overall feeling of safety in West Des Moines; 92% were satisfied with their overall quality of life, and 91% were satisfied with the overall image of the City.
- **Overall satisfaction with City services.** Ninety-three percent (93%) of the residents surveyed, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied (ratings of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale) with the quality of police, fire, and emergency medical services; 90% were satisfied with the maintenance of city buildings and facilities, and 89% were satisfied with the city's parks, recreation, programs and facilities. Residents were least satisfied with the flow of traffic/congestion management (60%).

- **City Services That Residents Think Are Most Important to Emphasize Over the Next Two Years.** The major city services that residents thought were most important for City leaders to emphasize over the next two years were: (1) flow of traffic/congestion management, (2) the City streets system, and (3) water services.
- **Public Safety.** Ninety-four percent (94%) of residents, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with the quality of local fire protection; 92% were satisfied with the quality of emergency medical services, and 91% were satisfied with overall quality of local police protection. Residents were least satisfied with the quality of fire prevention education (76%).
- **Public Safety Services That Residents Think Are Most Important to Emphasize Over the Next Two Years.** The public safety services that residents thought were most important for City leaders to emphasize over the next two years were: (1) local police protection and (2) officers' attitudes and behavior towards citizens.
- **Parks and Recreation.** Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the residents surveyed, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge; 87% were satisfied with the maintenance of City parks, 85% were satisfied with walking and biking trails in the City, and 83% were satisfied with the number of City parks. Residents were least satisfied with the City's senior citizen recreation programs (62%).
- **Parks and Recreation Services That Residents Think Are Most Important to Emphasize Over the Next Two Years.** The parks and recreation services that residents thought were most important for City leaders to emphasize over the next two years were: (1) maintenance of City parks, (2) walking and biking trails in the City, and (3) access to desired destinations via the bike and trail system.
- **Code Enforcement.** Three-fourths (75%) of residents, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with the enforcement of fire safety codes and regulations; 72% were satisfied with the enforcement of building codes related to commercial construction, and 67% were satisfied with the enforcement of building codes related to residential construction. Residents were least satisfied with enforcing the removal of junk cars and other nuisances (57%).
- **City Maintenance.** Ninety-two percent (92%) of the residents surveyed, *who had an opinion* were satisfied with the maintenance of City buildings; 88% were satisfied with the City's weekly curbside trash collection, and 87% were satisfied with overall cleanliness of City streets. Residents were least satisfied with the maintenance of City streets (68%).
- **City Maintenance Services That Residents Think Are Most Important to Emphasize Over the Next Two Years.** The City maintenance services that residents thought were most important for City leaders to emphasize over the next two years were: (1) maintenance of City streets and (2) snow removal on City streets.
- **City Water Services.** Ninety-two percent (92%) of residents, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with the reliability of water service to their home, and 82% were satisfied with the variety of payment options available. Residents were least satisfied with the quality of water delivered to their home (59%).

- **City Communications.** Eighty-five percent (85%) of the residents surveyed, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with the quality of the City’s WDM Magazine, and 70% were satisfied with the availability of information on City programs and services. Residents were least satisfied with the level of public involvement in local decisions (46%).

Other Findings

- More than three-fourths (77%) of the residents surveyed, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with the rate of growth in West Des Moines; 80% were satisfied with the quality of business growth, and 76% were satisfied with the quality of residential growth.
- Eighty-eight percent (88%) of residents, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied with the Public Library, and 64% indicated they had visited the West Des Moines Library in the last six months.
- When residents were asked which sources they have used during the past year to get information about the City, 86% indicated they used WDM Magazine; 68% used the City website, and 16% used the City Facebook page (multiple responses could be given to this question).
- Residents were asked which improvements were needed most in their neighborhood. The top three responses were (1) street maintenance, (2) more enforcement of traffic laws, and (3) more enforcement of property maintenance codes.
- Thirty-eight percent (38%) of the residents surveyed indicated it is “very easy” or “easy” to travel by bicycle in the City of West Des Moines. Nearly half (48%) of residents think it is “very important” or “important” for the City to make it easier to travel by bicycle within the City.

Investment Priorities

Recommended Priorities for the Next Two Years. In order to help the City identify investment priorities for the next two years, ETC Institute conducted an Importance-Satisfaction (I-S) analysis. This analysis examined the importance that residents placed on each City service and the level of satisfaction with each service.

By identifying services of high importance and low satisfaction, the analysis identified which services will have the most impact on overall satisfaction with City services over the next two years. If the City wants to improve its overall satisfaction rating, the City should prioritize investments in services with the highest Importance-Satisfaction (I-S) ratings. Details regarding the methodology for the analysis are provided in this report.

Based on the results of the Importance-Satisfaction (I-S) Analysis, ETC Institute recommends the following:

- **Overall Priorities for the City by Major Category.** The first level of analysis reviewed the importance of and satisfaction with major categories of City services. This analysis was conducted to help set the overall priorities for the City. Based on the results of this analysis, the major services that are recommended as the top three priorities for investment over the next two years in order to raise the City's overall satisfaction rating are listed below in descending order of the Importance-Satisfaction rating:
 - Flow of traffic and congestion management (IS Rating= 0.2116)
 - Overall quality of the City streets system (IS Rating=0.1373)
- **Priorities within Departments/Specific Areas:** The second level of analysis reviewed the importance of and satisfaction of services within departments and specific service areas. This analysis was conducted to help departmental managers set priorities for their department. Based on the results of this analysis, the services that are recommended as the top priorities within each area over the next two years are listed below:
 - **Public Safety:** none of the public safety services were selected as a “high priority” for improvement
 - **Parks and Recreation:** none of the parks and recreation services were selected as a “high priority” for improvement
 - **City Maintenance:** maintenance of City streets